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INTERIOR POLICY TAKES CAUTIOUS VIEW OF PUTTING FOREIGN BIG GAME ON PUBLIC LANDS

The policy is based on recommendations in a study report by Dr. Frank C. Craighead of the Environmental Research Institute and Dr. Raymond F. Dasmann of the Conservation Foundation staff, Washington, D. C.

Objectives of the study were to analyze effects from the introduction of foreign big game animals on the public lands and to develop general guidelines and criteria for specific proposals. A number of proposals have been made in Western States to admit new species for big game hunting or to stock for preservation of certain species that have become almost extinct in their native lands.

Interior's new policy provides that foreign big game animals will not be permitted in national parks, wilderness or primitive areas, wildlife refuges, native game ranges or other areas designated for the preservation of native flora and fauna. Also, foreign big game animals will be excluded from buffer strips surrounding such areas.

Foreign big game animals, the policy further provides, should be excluded from any area of Federal land that is of primary value as livestock range and is already fully stocked with domestic livestock. Exceptions would be made only when it has been shown conclusively that the foreign animal will not compete significantly with the native species. Foreign animals will be excluded from the vicinity of any area in which rare or uncommon native species occur, until it can be demonstrated that no conflict will result.

Foreign animals also will be excluded from areas of primary value for other purposes, such as farming and timber production, except where it can be demonstrated that uses can be fully coordinated.

The Department's new policy is subject to review periodically for changes in the light of new knowledge. The Department recognizes that the introduction of foreign animals to any given area is in itself "a force capable of causing drastic changes in environment."

The Craighead-Dasmann report was reviewed by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, president of the Wildlife Management Institute, and an Advisory Committee representing the National Park Service, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Forest Service, Department of Defense, Western Association of State Game and Fish Commissioners, National Academy of Sciences, National Wildlife Federation, National Advisory Board Council for Public Land Management, and the Bureau of Land Management.

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